



Kia ora

11 April 2018

Firstly, thank you for electing me to serve as your Mayor in the February by-election. I am humbled and honoured to have this opportunity and look forward to working with you, among you and for this great place.

I am preparing my first letter to ratepayers 45 days after being sworn-in as Mayor of Kaipara District. From the fresh perspective of a new Mayor who's also new to Council, arriving in the middle of the term, it's a great opportunity to share highlights of what I've found, what's going on now and next, and some things to keep watch for on the horizon.

A highlight of the information I've learnt in the last few weeks is about the reduced debt level of Kaipara District Council. Following a period of relative austerity and years of focus by Council on debt reduction, at some pain to residents and ratepayers, Kaipara debt levels have improved relative to other councils and Kaipara is now 39th of 55 councils on a debt per capita basis. Kaipara District Council's debt servicing, as a proportion of operating revenue, is about the same as Rotorua, Masterton or Dunedin. This improvement puts Kaipara District Council in the middle of the pack, no longer a special case.

What's going on?

At present Council staff and elected members are being kept very busy. Seasonal peaks of activity happen now. In addition to Council building its once-every-three-years major planning document – the Long Term Plan – the autumn is a very busy period processing consents before the winter. Likewise, autumn is also a peak time for roading works across Kaipara District.

- **Long Term Plan 2018/2028** Through April and May Council will be working to build a Long Term Plan that reflects the aspirations and optimism I hear from people all across Kaipara, and from the 268 people who offered their feedback on our consultation document. The number of submitters (including nearly 50 people or groups who want to address the Council at hearings) is a great show of civic engagement. And the better this engagement is then the better the Long Term Plan will be for us all; your voices will be clearer. The Long Term Plan 2018/2028 will be in place by the end of June 2018, setting the course for the years ahead. Thanks to everyone who's contributing to this.
- **Building consents** One of the signs of how Kaipara is growing is the number and value of building consents. In February 2018 there were 12% more building consent applications than in February 2017. The combined value of the February 2018 building consent projects is \$11,825,646. Expect to see more hammers flying and roofs going up across Kaipara. Also, resource consent applications are up by nearly 60% across the same period. Council is preparing for increasing growth and these trends are positive.
- **Kaipara Roads** The extra 100mm of rain in February (that's why lawns and farm pastures are growing so well now) slowed roading maintenance during that month. Despite this the Roothing Team is on track with increasing expenditure to meet the total \$15m spend on Kaipara roads. Roothing Panels across Kaipara are meeting with Council in April to keep Council's ear to the ground. Between now and the end of June you should expect to see more work on our Kaipara roads than we've seen at this time of year. That may mean more patience will be needed as you travel Kaipara roads, and please mind your speed for safety on loose metal and to help avoid broken windscreens. Check out the chart below for our upcoming Kaipara roading spend. Our roading network catch-up continues.

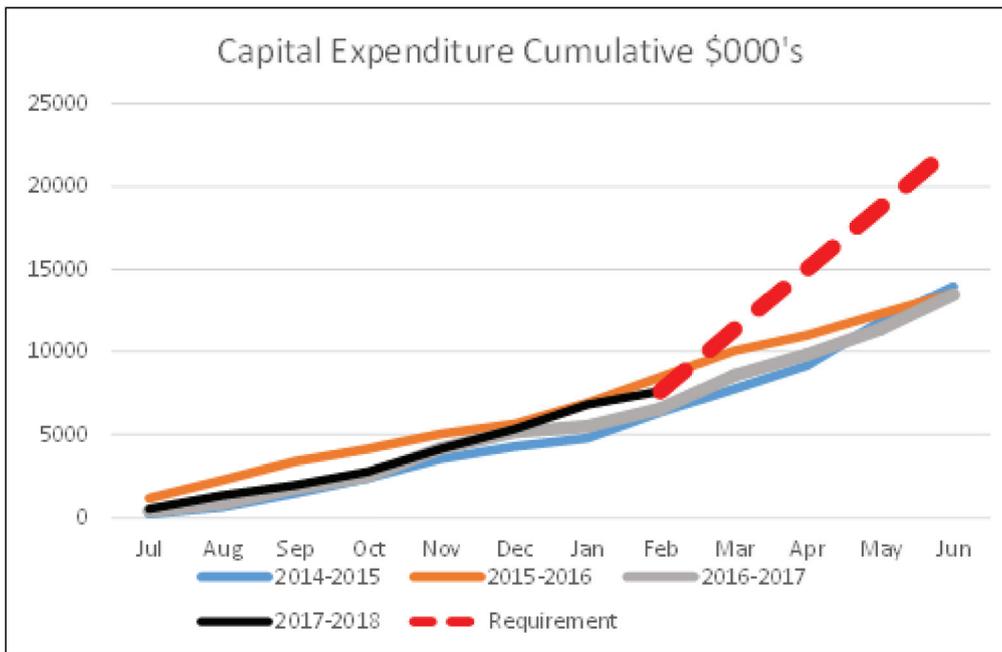
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Territory ahead

The Tegel chicken farm resource consent application continues to receive national media attention and the proposal is of interest to many people. I met with a group of protestors on the steps outside the Council building in Dargaville on what was my first day at the office, listened to their concerns and encouraged them to make submissions to the process. Nearly 5,000 submissions were received by Kaipara District Council and Northland Regional Council, which shows the high level of interest in the proposal. The appointment of the joint Commissioners' panel is ahead, and they will convene hearings in due course. There is some distance for this story to run.

Finally, on a personal note I'd like to thank everyone for the support I've had in these few weeks since the by-election. Civic engagement is good and people I meet are happy to offer wisdom, friendly advice and (most commonly) a lament about the condition of their local roads. We're all on these roads together and are taking the rough with the smooth. Like everyone I'm looking forward to better roads ahead for Kaipara. We're getting there. Keep safe as you go.

Nga mihi nui,

Dr Jason Smith
Mayor of Kaipara District